

GRACE KLEIN

Community

Dear Friend,

We're at the doorstep of a new year. Most of us have thought about "New Year's Resolutions" or at least changes we want to make in 2015. As I think about how I can make myself change, the Lord brings to mind where he talks about making things new in scripture, such as:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. (Revelation 21:5-7).

As I set out every year to lose weight and exercise more or keep other resolutions, I have to remember more than shaping and caring for this body I need to care for and feed my soul. What does it mean to be a new creation or to be made new spiritually? I believe it means for one thing that He puts His life/Spirit within us to convict us of sin and help us to live for Him who saved us. Our desires for the things of this world begin to fade and are replaced with His desires for us to know Him and be used by Him to help and reach others with His love (Rom 12:2, 2 Cor. 3:18). This change does not happen right away for everyone. You may feel it is not happening for you.

How do we experience and truly make progress in this new life God gives us? Certainly, spending more time with our Lord is vital through reading His word more and praying more often. This is one of the best resolutions we could make for the new year. It can be hard to make yourself sit down and read the bible or pray. It often seems like you are not getting anything out of it. Please stick with it. The more you do it, the more the Lord will begin to open your eyes to see connections and truths in His word in ways that you just know He is teaching you something. He will begin to show you evidence that He is working in your life.

However, another big part of making progress in your spiritual life and seeing Him work in your life is obedience to His word. There is a reason the bible constantly exhorts us to obey and keep God's word (John 14:21-24, 15:8-14, 1 John 2:3-6), be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:21-25), and fellowship with the Lord in His work and suffering (Eph 2:10, Phil 1:29). The apostle Paul knew Christ by sharing / fellowshiping in His work and suffering, striving to live and advance the gospel. Paul knew the scriptures before he met Christ on the Damascus road, but they did not come alive to him until he began to live for Christ, serving Him (Phil 3:4-14). Once he began to serve Christ and experience that fellowship, nothing else mattered to him. All the things that were important before faded away compared to the surpassing worth of knowing and serving Christ. The beauty of it is that it is a self-building cycle. The more time with spend with Him reading His word, praying and serving Him, the more joy and satisfaction we get from it and the more we want to do it.

You may think that you don't have any ability to serve or anything to offer the Lord. The bible is full of people without much ability or resources that were used mightily for God's purposes. The apostles were not anything special. They had all kinds of issues and character flaws, but they devoted themselves to Him. In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus was more impressed by a poor widow who sacrificed to give two cents than all the others who gave out of their abundance. It is true not only of our resources, but of ourselves. He wants us to be His hands and feet, even if it is just loving our neighbor, even when they are not very likeable, giving a kind word, or taking time to listen to someone's problems and praying with them. These are the things that are pleasing to the Lord and bring us into fellowship with Him. It will be hard sometimes, and we need to pray for strength and courage to do it. We also need to pray for eyes to see the opportunities He gives us to serve Him by loving and helping others (Matt 25:34-40). However, when we sacrifice to help others, it gives us a joy that is indescribable knowing that we have the privilege of being used by our Lord as part of His plan to love people and draw them to Himself. We may not see the fruit of what we do to serve others, but along the way He will show us evidences that He is using us and working in us.

What does it mean that "He who overcomes will inherit these things" in the verse from Rev 21 above? See John 16:33, Rom 12:9-21, and 1 John 5:1-5. Christ has overcome the world, and by faith in Him we also overcome the world. Let us resolve to hold fast to our faith in Him, to spend more time with Him, and to follow Him by obedience to His word. Remember also the words of Rom 8:16-18.

If you need a bible to read or bible on CD please let us know at 390-2211 or Kristine@gracekleincommunity.com

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" - Hebrews 13:16